

Message Text

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FOR USDEL CSCE

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TAGS: CSCE

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON BELGRADE MEETING

FOLLOWING FYI IS TEXT OF ARTICLE ON BELGRADE CONFERENCE
BY MICHAEL GETLER WHICH APPEARED IN THE FEBRUARY 23
EDITION OF THE WASHINGTON POST:

BEGIN TEXT:

BELGRADE MEETING: LOST HOPES AND STALLED EFFORT AT DETENTE

1. THE EAST-WEST CONFERENCE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY AND
COOPERATION HERE, ONCE LOOKED UPON WITH GREAT EXPECTATIONS,
WILL SOON BECOME MERELY ONE MORE INGREDIENT ON THE PILE
OF GENERALLY STAGNATING SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

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2. AFTER NINE MONTHS OF DEBATE, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT
THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF ANY POSITIVE RESOLUTIONS
COMING OUT OF THIS 35-NATION GATHERING.

3. AS THE CONFERENCE MOVES THROUGH ITS FINAL, DESULTORY
DAYS IN THIS YUGOSLAV HOST CAPITAL, THE INEVITABLE QUESTIONS
ARE BEING ASKED ABOUT WHETHER ANY BETTER RESULTS COULD
HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITH A DIFFERENT APPROACH -- PARTICULARLY

BY THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ARTICULATE YET CONTROVERSIAL

SPOKESMAN HERE, FORMER SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ARTHUR GOLDBERG.

4. "ABOUT THE MOST ACCURATE THING YOU COULD SAY ABOUT AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG IS THAT HE MADE IT EASIER FOR THE RUSSIANS TO DO WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO ANYWAY" SAYS A DELEGATE FROM A NEUTRAL NATION.

5. HIS REMARKS ARE NOT MEANT AS CRITICAL OF GOLDBERG, BUT RATHER, HE SAYS, AS THE BEST WAY HE CAN SUM UP IN A SINGLE SENTENCE THE FORCES THAT LEAD TO FRUSTRATION AND INDECISIVENESS AT THE CLOSE.

6. "YOU MUST GUARD AGAINST THE IDEA THAT THE WEST IS TO BLAME FOR LACK OF PROGRESS HERE. THAT IS THE SOVIET LINE AND IT IS FALSE," A NORWEGIAN DELEGATE SAYS. "WHAT IS REFLECTED HERE REALLY IS TWO YEARS OF A STAGNANT CLIMATE IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS GENERALLY. BELGRADE IS JUST A PART OF IT."

7. DELEGATES FROM 33 EUROPEAN NATIONS PLUS THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA HAVE BEEN GATHERED HERE TO REVIEW HOW WELL THEIR GOVERNMENTS HAVE IMPLEMENTED THE AGREEMENTS UNCLASSIFIED

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THEY SIGNED IN HELSINKI IN AUGUST 1975.

8. ALTHOUGH THE HELSINKI ACCORDS DEALT WITH MANY QUESTIONS OF SECURITY AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION, THEY ALSO PLEDGED ALL SIGNERS -- INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES -- TO RESPECT "HUMAN RIGHTS ... FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS ... AND THE FREER MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS."

9. IT IS THOSE HUMAN RIGHTS PLEDGES THAT TURNED THIS REVIEW CONFERENCE INTO A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST, AND ESPECIALLY, THOUGH NOT EXCLUSIVELY, BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW.

10. IN CONTRAST TO ITS OPENING DAYS AND WEEKS, WHEN THOUSANDS OF DELEGATES AND JOURNALISTS FLOODED THE NEW CONCRETE AND GLASS CENTER BUILT BY THE YUGOSLAVS TO HOUSE THIS MEETING, THE CORRIDORS NOW SEEM EMPTY. THE ENDLESS MEETINGS ARE BORING TO MANY. TIME IS SHORT AND SO ARE TEMPER. THE ATMOSPHERE IS LARGELY ONE OF RESIGNATION.

11. A FINAL DOCUMENT WILL BE AGREED UPON SOON BUT -- MOSTLY BECAUSE OF SOVIET-BLOC RESISTANCE -- IT WON'T SAY MUCH NOR GIVE MUCH HINT OF SIX WEEKS, IN PARTICULAR, OF

OFTEN BITTER DEBATE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS OVER IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS.

12. ONE THING HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. THE PARTICIPANTS HAVE AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN MADRID IN 1980. SO THE HELSINKI REVIEW PROCESS WILL CONTINUE.

13. BUT IS IT MEANINGFUL? CAN IT HELP THE REAL LIFE SITUATION OF DISSIDENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE OR FAMILIES WHO WANT TO EMIGRATE? WOULD A DIFFERENT AMERICAN STRATEGY -- ONE THAT WAS QUIETER AND DIDN'T HAMMER AWAY AT THE SOVIETS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN FRONT OF 34 OTHER COUNTRIES -- UNCLASSIFIED

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WORK BETTER, OR DID THE SOVIETS COME HERE PREPARED NOT TO GIVE AN INCH ON HUMAN RIGHTS NO MATTER WHAT ANYBODY SAID OR HOW THEY SAID IT?

14. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THERE ARE MANY OPINIONS.

15. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, THE PREDOMINANT VIEW BASED ON NUMEROUS INTERVIEWS SEEMS TO BE THAT THE SOVIETS AND THE MOST HARDLINE OF THEIR SIX ALLIES IN THE WARSAW PACT TOOK A BEATING HERE IN THE EYES OF THE WEST AND MANY OF THE NEUTRAL AND NONALIGNED COUNTRIES, AND THAT NOT MUCH MORE PROGRESS COULD HAVE BEEN MADE WITH A DIFFERENT TONE.

16. THE PROBLEM, OF COURSE, IS THAT NO ONE WILL KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITH A QUIETER US POSITION AND SOME OF THE DISSENTERS ARE ADAMANT THAT THE WEST, AND GOLDBERG IN PARTICULAR, HAVE WORSENED RATHER THAN IMPROVED THE CLIMATE OF DETENTE AS A RESULT.

17. "THIS WHOLE CAMPAIGN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PRESS, AND STARTED BY THE US DELEGATION," SAYS POLISH AMBASSADOR MARIAN DOBROSIELSKI, "HAS NOT HELPED ONE SINGLE PERSON IN THIS RESPECT. RATHER, IT HAS HARDENED POSITIONS AND INCREASED SUSPICIONS. NO SOCIALIST COUNTRY CAN PERMIT ITSELF TO BE DICTATED TO AS TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO WITH THIS OR THAT PERSON OR GROUP," HE ADDED, REFERRING TO THE AMERICAN-LED CAMPAIGN TO EASE PRESSURE ON SPECIFIC DISSIDENTS.

18. "THE AMERICAN TACTICS, OR BETTER SAID THE TACTICS OF 'YOUR JUDGE,'" AS THE SOVIET-BLOC REFERS TO GOLDBERG SOMEWHAT DERISIVELY, "HAVE POISONED THE ATMOSPHERE," UNCLASSIFIED

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ANOTHER EAST EUROPEAN SAYS.

19. "EVEN IF WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO BECAUSE IT LOOKS AS THOUGH WE ARE BEING FORCED," HE

SAID.

20. SAYS ANOTHER EAST EUROPEAN: "IT SERVES THOSE WHO WANT TO HARDEN THE LINE EVEN FURTHER BECAUSE IT FEEDS THOSE WHO SAY TO BREZHNEV, 'LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE, YOU'VE ALLOWED INTERFERENCE IN OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS.'"

21. THAT IS A POTENTIALLY CRUCIAL FACTOR TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE AND ONE THAT A NUMBER OF WESTERN DELEGATES ALSO SEEM TO SHARE.

22. IN THIS VIEW, SOVIET LEADER LEONID BREZHNEV SO BADLY WANTED A PRESTIGIOUS HELSINKI AGREEMENT IN 1975 TO VERIFY SOVIET-DOMINATED POSTWAR BOUNDARIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND TO LEAD TO A SALT AGREEMENT AND SUMMIT MEETING WITH THE UNITED STATES, THAT HE YIELDED, CARELESSLY IN THE VIEW OF KREMLIN HARD LINERS, TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS TACKED ON BY THE WEST.

23. NOW, DESPITE REPORTS FOR YEARS THAT BREZHNEV WAS ILL, THERE IS WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT HE IS INDEED ON THE WAY OUT AND THAT THE POWER STRUGGLE NOW GOING ON IN THE KREMLIN CONTAINS A SIZEABLE DEGREE OF BACKLASH AGAINST BREZHNEV FOR THE HELSINKI HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS AND THAT THE STRONG US STAND HERE HAS GIVEN THE GROUP AMMUNITION.

24. A DELEGATE FROM NEUTRAL SWEDEN IS ALSO HARD ON THE US STANCE, AGREEING WITH FORMER CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN MINISTER AND NOW EXILED DISSIDENT SPOKESMAN, JIRI HAJEK, WHO RECENTLY CRITICIZED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S TOUGH APPROACH TO COMMUNIST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.
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"IT IS MORE IMPORTANT," HAJEK SAID, "TO STRENGTHEN THE WHOLE PROCESS OF DETENTE IN WHICH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HAS ITS OWN PLACE."

25. MOST DELEGATES DON'T SEEM TO QUESTION THE SINCERITY OF THE AMERICAN INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS. YET THE AWARENESS OF THE HEAVY HAND OF DOMESTIC US POLITICS HAD PRODUCED DOUBTS AS TO WHO IT IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS MOST INTERESTED IN.

26. DESPITE THE DOUBTS, HOWEVER, THE BROADER OPINION SEEMS TO BE THAT "WHATEVER THE WEST, AND ESPECIALLY THE AMERICANS, HAVE DONE HAS BEEN GENERALLY FOR THE GOOD,"

SAYS A DELEGATE FROM NEUTRAL AUSTRIA. "THE AMERICANS MADE IT LIVELY, INTERESTING AND GAVE THE INITIATIVE TO THE WEST. IT WAS NO FAILURE BECAUSE THE SOVIETS KNOW THEY WILL BE SUBJECTED TO THIS AGAIN. YOU HAVE TO EXERT

SOME PRESSURE ON THEM."

27. TOWARD THE END, HE SAYS, THE WEST WAS TOO LATE IN PUTTING TOGETHER A COUNTERPROPOSAL FOR A FINAL DOCUMENT AGAINST A SOVIET OFFERING. AND, GOLDBERG HAS DRAWN CRITICISM FOR ANOTHER SHARP ATTACK ON THE SOVIETS NEAR THE FINAL STAGES ON JAN. 27 THAT IS VIEWED BY SOME HERE AS ENDING ANY DOUBTS IN THE KREMLIN TO REJECT ANY BUT THE MOST BLAND FINAL STATEMENT AND ACCEPT NO CRITICISM.

28. "THE WEST MADE IT A LITTLE TOO EASY ON THEM AT THE END," THE AUSTRIAN SAYS. "BUT IT WAS A COLLECTIVE FAULT, NOT GOLDBERG'S. HAD HE NOT SPOKEN UP ON JANUARY 27, IT WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED ANYTHING. IT JUST GAVE THE SOVIETS A PRETEXT FOR SAYING 'NOW YOU GET UNCLASSIFIED

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NOTHING.'"

29. "MAYBE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INITIAL DISAPPOINTMENTS AND THERE IS A NEED TO RETHINK TACTICS," SAYS THE NORWEGIAN DELEGATE. "BUT SOVIETS CLEARLY KNOW NOW THAT EVERYONE ELSE EXCEPT THEIR OWN KIND TAKE IT SERIOUSLY AND IT CAN'T BE IGNORED AND IT'S NOT COMING JUST FROM THE US."

30. "WOULD THE SOVIETS HAVE INVADED CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968," ASKS AN AMERICAN DELEGATE, "IF THERE HAD BEEN A HELSINKI AGREEMENT AND THEY KNEW THEY'D BE TAKING A LOT OF GUFF AT A REVIEW CONFERENCE? MAYBE THEY WOULD HAVE, BUT MAYBE THEY ALSO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT MORE ABOUT IT."

31. ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX UNDERCURRENTS HERE IS AMONG THE KREMLIN'S ALLIES. OFFICIALLY, THEY HAVE ADHERED TO THE SOVIET LINE. BUT, IF SOME WESTERN DELEGATES ARE TO BE BELIEVED, THEY ALSO HAVE TOLD SOME US DELEGATES TO "KEEP STICKING IT TO THEM," MEANING MOSCOW.

32. IN THIS VIEW, THE BELGRADE REVIEW PROCEDURE DOES GIVE THE EAST EUROPEANS SOME MANEUVERING ROOM. HUNGARY, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS NOT SAID A WORD IN DEFENSE OF THE CZECH CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS.

33. THE SOVIETS' REFUSAL TO ALLOW ANY MAJOR NEW DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN HERE HAS ALSO COST MOSCOW SUPPORT AMONG NEUTRALS AND NONALIGNED, WHO HOPED THAT THE REVIEW FORUM WOULD BE ONE IN WHICH THEY COULD HAVE A POLICYMAKING VOICE.

34. GOLDBERG, 69, SAYS EVERYONE KNOWS IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO ALLOW A CONFERENCE TO DICTATE THEIR INTERNAL SITUATION. "BUT WE HAD TO SPEAK OUT

HONESTLY TO MAINTAIN OUR CREDIBILITY, BECAUSE THE FINAL
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ACT OF HELSINKI PROVIDES FOR THIS, AND BECAUSE IT WILL
NOT DETER THE PROCESS OF DETENTE. THE SALT TALKS GO
ON, THEY SIGNED A GRAIN DEAL WITH US, AND THE TONE OF
TALKS IN WASHINGTON IS NOT THE SAME AS IN BELGRADE.

35. "MEANWHILE, WE HAVE GIVEN HOPE TO DISSENTERS IN
PRAGUE AND THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHERS IN EASTERN EUROPE
THAT THEY ARE NOT OVERLOOKED, THAT THEIR RIGHTS TO
ORGANIZE INTO MONITORING GROUPS IS NOT IGNORED BECAUSE TO
DO SO WOULD BE A TREMENDOUS LETDOWN. THEY'RE PRETTY
REALISTIC THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM,
BUT IT GIVES THEM HEART."

36. "DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE RESTRAINING
INFLUENCE THAT THE EYES OF THE WESTERN AND NEUTRAL
WORLD HAS ON THEM?" HE ASKS.

37. "HOW LONG -- AFTER TRYING QUIET DIPLOMACY -- COULD
YOU SIT HERE AND NOT MAKE A STATEMENT ON A FAMILY
REUNIFICATION CASE IN WHICH THE PERSON LOSES HIS JOB
BECAUSE HE ASKS FOR A VISA AND THEN IS ARRESTED AS A
PARASITE FOR NOT HAVING A JOB?"

38. GOLDBERG BELIEVES THE BELGRADE PROCESS -- TEMPORARILY
AT LEAST -- HAS HAD A RESTRAINING EFFECT ON ARRESTS AND
TRIALS OF DISSIDENTS IN BOTH THE SOVIET UNION AND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

39. ANOTHER AMERICAN, TRYING TO SUM THINGS UP, SAYS
"YOU CAN'T SAY IT WAS GOLDBERG EITHER WAY ON THE QUESTION
OF WHETHER WE GOT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OUT OF THIS.
THE DELEGATION IS WORKING UNDER WHITE HOUSE ORDERS AND YOU
COULDN'T SWEEP HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER THE RUG. IT'S A PART
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OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY."

END TEXT.
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